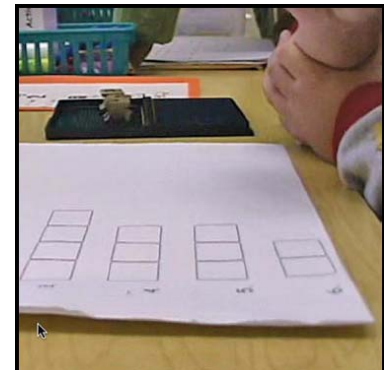


Alternative Assessment: Assistive Technology To The Rescue



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Assessment systems in general attempt to answer the following questions:

- What have students learned?
- How well were they taught?
- How effective is a school?
- How effective is a school district?
- How effective is a state in supporting local reform efforts?

Standards-Based Assessments and Students with Disabilities

- What students with disabilities gain from their experience in school?
- How society benefits from its investment in the futures of these students?
- NCLB
- IDEA

Limited Participation in Assessment Systems

- Limited opportunities to participate in the general curriculum
- Assessment instruments contain inaccessible testing stimuli
- Require behaviors beyond the response repertoire of some students

Without participation, there is no means of determining the extent to which students with disabilities receive an equal opportunity to learn and succeed.

Essential Components of an Inclusive Assessment System

- Student participation in assessments
- Testing accommodations
- Alternate assessments
- Reporting results
- Accountability

Lehr and Thurlow (2003)

Principles for consideration

- Development of foundational skills
- Individualization
- Respectful schedules and locations
- Experience of sense of mastery or accomplishment
- Quality of a student's immediate experience

(Ford, Davern, and Schnoor, 2001)

The Alternate Maryland School Assessment (ALT-MSA)

- Designed for students with significant cognitive disabilities
- Assesses attainment of reading and math mastery objectives
- Mastery objectives are written on student's instructional level
- Mastery objectives are aligned with grade level Maryland content standards
- Based on alternate achievement standards

How are students selected for the ALT-MSA?

- Students with disabilities in grades 3-8 and 10 must participate in either MSA or Alt-MSA.
- The decision for which assessment is appropriate for an individual student is made by each student's IEP Team.

Criteria for participating in ALT-MSA

- Student's learning is at emerging, readiness, or functional literacy level.
- Student requires explicit and ongoing instruction.
- Student requires extensive and substantial modification of general education curriculum.
- Student requires intensive instruction.
- Student requires extensive support to perform and participate meaningfully and productively.
- Student cannot participate in MSA even with accommodations.

ALT-MSA Assessment Format

- Test examiner team writes reading and math MO's
 - May include objectives in the student's IEP that have not been achieved
- Team constructs a portfolio of evidence that demonstrates attainment of target MO's.
- Scorers review portfolios to determine if MO's have been attained.

Common Threads

(Baltimore County Public Schools)

- A guide to incorporate the Voluntary State Curriculum (VSC) and the Alt-MSA into everyday instruction
- Students within a special education program share common threads with their typical peers by having access to the general education curriculum.
- Guide contains reading and math mastery objectives, suggested activities and sample worksheets to guide daily instruction

The Role of the Assistive Technology Team (District Level)

- Advocate for UDL
- Participate in Alt-MSA E-Community
- Provide access to software training and technical support
- Provide a searchable data base of electronic learning and testing materials

Role of Assistive Technology Team (Individual Student Level)

- Assistive Technology Consideration
- IEP Referral Process
- Assessment Process → SETT Framework
 - Student
 - Environment
 - Tasks
 - Tools

(Zabala, 1995)

UDL: Implications for Large-Scale Assessment

- There are large person to person differences in how the brain “networks” to perform complex actions.
- Each student brings a unique assortment of strengths, challenges, and preferences into the learning environment.

(Dolan & Hall, 2001)

UDL and the Brain Regions

The What, How & Why of Learning

- Recognition networks are specialized to receive and analyze the information (recognition)
- Strategic networks are specialized to plan and execute actions (expression)
- Affective networks are specialized to evaluate and set priorities (engagement)

(Dolan & Hall, 2001)

Technology Considerations

- Identify ways the student responds
- Identify to what the student responds
- Identify computer access skills
- Identify individual presentation style preferences

Jo Meyer, SoftTouch (2006)

Examples/Case Studies

- Accessible and motivating practice and testing materials
- Consideration and selection of appropriate assistive technologies

The goal is to provide students with access to the curriculum and document that students are learning.

Software & Hardware Resources

- Boardmaker
- Classroom Suite
- Communicate Webwide
- Intellikeys
- Intelliswitch
- Kurzweil
- Learning Magic
- News-2-You
- Overlay Maker
- Test Me Score Me
- Stages

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